

SERVICE AVIATION



Royal Air Force and Fleet Air Arm News : Official Announcements : Military Aviation Abroad

The State of Expansion

SINCE the Government decided, in May, 1935, to expand the Royal Air Force, the following progress has been made: Twenty-five new stations and armament training camps have been opened and twenty-one more sites have been selected; some 3,850 pilots have been chosen and about 3,500 more have already completed, or are in the course of, training; the number of airmen who have entered from the same date totals some 25,200. In addition, approximately 4,840 boys are being trained at Halton and Cranwell as aircraft apprentices, and elsewhere 960 boy entrants are under instruction.

A Reconnaissance Wing in the Mediterranean

NO. 1 (General Reconnaissance) Wing commenced to form at Malta on September 23 and moved to Arzeu (near Oran, on the Algerian Coast) on September 30. It is located in H.M.S. *Cyclops*. The temporary wing comprises Nos. 209 and 210 (General Reconnaissance) Squadrons and is administered by the A.O.C., Royal Air Force, Mediterranean.

The postal address of the unit is: No. 1 (General Reconnaissance) Wing, H.M.S. *Cyclops*, c/o G.P.O., London.

H.M.S. *Cyclops* is a submarine depot ship of 11,300 tons.

The Aden Command

IT is notified in Air Ministry orders that in future the Headquarters of the Aden Command shall be known as "Air Headquarters." It has been agreed with the War Office that the Army Headquarters shall be known as "Headquarters, British Army Troops, Aden."

Aden, which has recently been transferred from the Indian Empire to the care of the Colonial Office, is one of those sections of the Empire where defence is the responsibility of the Air Force. The correct title of the Command is "British Forces in Aden." The military units, which consist of a heavy battery and A.A. Section, R.A., and a Fortress Company, R.E., are under the general command of the Air Officer Commanding.

R.A.F. Station, Farnborough

THE R.A.F. Station, Farnborough, will be transferred to the Fighter Command and placed in No. 22 (Army Co-operation) Group with effect from November 1.

The School of Photography will remain directly under No. 24 (Training) Group for technical administration.

No. 2 (A.C.) Squadron Reunion

IT is proposed to hold a dinner in London on Friday, December 10, to celebrate the silver jubilee of No. 2 (A.C.) Squadron. Officers who have served in the Squadron at any time since its formation in 1912, and who feel that their addresses may not be known, are asked to communicate with the Adjutant, No. 2 (A.C.) Squadron, R.A.F., Hawkinge, Kent.

The Observer's Wing Revived

THE Air Ministry has decided to introduce a badge for air observers the design of which will follow that granted to observers in the Great War. It will be issued and worn under the same general conditions as apply to the pilot's flying badge. For the present Air Officers Commanding will authorise the wearing of the badge when an airman has (1) passed the air observer's course, (2) served in a squadron for at least six months, (3) completed at least fifty hours' flying as air observer, and (4) been recommended by his C.O.

This order will be welcomed in the Service. The old war-time badge of a capital "O" surmounted by a single wing is still occasionally seen on the tunics of officers employed on special work. Though everyone in the R.A.F. coveted the pilot's wings above everything else, a special honour attached to the observer's single wing, as that could only be won during the Great War by spending so many hours in the air over the lines; whereas a pilot had to gain his wings before he was allowed to fly at all at the front—and some pilots never got there. The revived observer's badge cannot be won in the same dangerous and honourable conditions, but none the less the modern qualified observer well deserves the distinction, for his work is arduous and responsible.



ASPECT RATIO: Vickers Wellesleys of a unit which demonstrated before our German guests at Mildenhall, as recorded on page 426c.

Apparently this order only affects airmen. Naval observers are either officers or ratings of the Royal Navy, and over them the Air Ministry has no control. Cases will probably arise when R.A.F. officers ought to receive some form of observer's badge, and we might suggest the case of balloon observers, some of whom have not been allowed (perhaps for reasons of health) to qualify for the pilot's wings, and therefore have no distinguishing badge on their uniforms.

A.C. Training

ARMY co-operation units worked with all Army Commands during the past quarter as part of Brigade, Divisional, Inter-Divisional and other exercises.

A flight of No. 26 (A.C.) Squadron was sent to Leuchars for three weeks to work with various Territorial units camping in Scotland. Certain other squadrons were moved into the East Anglian manoeuvre area and other aerodromes were used as follows: No. 2 Squadron, Friday Wood; No. 4, Mildenhall, Stradishall, Debden and Duxford; No. 13, Sawbridgeworth and Henlow; No. 16, Okehampton.

On one notable occasion No. 16 (A.C.) Squadron, to quote an official source, "actually produced thirty-eight sorties in one day while co-operating with the Third Division."

Two bomber squadrons (Nos. 18 and 57) and two fighter units (Nos. 29 and 64) also took part in Army Exercises, the pilots receiving practice in observing military movements. Low-flying attacks were made on numerous Regular and Territorial units.

Artillery co-operation at Artillery Practice Camps was provided as follows: Redesdale, No. 26 Squadron; Okehampton, Nos. 4, 13 and 16; Larkhill, Nos. 2, 13 and 16; West Down, Nos. 16, 13, 4 and 2.

One shoot was conducted with a Naval battery and an R.A.F. pilot, using Army procedure. All three Services reported favourably.

Apart from the normal photographic activity, photographs were used to study various forms of camouflage for tents and other objects.

A Vickers Valentia bomber-transport was allotted to No. 50 (A.C.) Wing from May to the end of July, and several troop-carrying exercises were conducted by all Commands. One of these, with the Southern Command, was to test the supply of mechanised forces by air. The aircraft were a Bristol Bombay and a Handley Page. Rations, spare parts, petrol and oil were flown from Andover to Boscombe Down.

About 169 flights were made and 2,960 troops were carried.

No. 16 (A.C.) Squadron now regards it as normal to work with a tank instead of the more usual R.A.F. tender. It will be realised that the problem of communication with aircraft is rendered more difficult by the fact that armoured formations cannot be accompanied by R.A.F. wireless tenders, which are non-fighting vehicles and require protection.

No. 53 (A.C.) Squadron, which, together with No. 59 (A.C.) Squadron, is paying special attention to training in night reconnaissance, gained some valuable experience while working in the Aldershot Command Administrative Exercises. The differences between day and night reconnaissances were well brought out, particularly as regards the necessity of exploiting the smallest clue to the maximum extent. Differentiation between civil and military movement is at